

Shillong Declaration: International Conclave on Water, Hill Lives, and Future Advocates Holistic Approach for Sustainable Development



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AT News 12 February 2024 43723 views

In a landmark move, participants of the International Conclave on Water, Hill Lives, and Future, convened in Shillong on February 9th and 10th, 2024, have jointly adopted the "Shillong Declaration." This declaration underscores the critical interlinkages between water resources and hill ecosystems, emphasizing a holistic approach towards achieving sustainable development in these regions.

1. The vital role of water as a critical resource and the need for enhanced resilience around water in hilly terrains, as underscored by the declining water table and spring water levels, waning traditional water systems, retreating, and polluting rivers, changing rainfall patterns, increase in the natural disasters and the recent pandemic, among others.
2. The fact that hill regions will be vulnerable, in absence of improved, safe, and sustainable water management and any uncontrolled anthropogenic action can add to this risk.
3. The importance of protecting springs, rivers, and all other traditional water management systems as well as the complex nature of the hill ecosystems, and of ensuring sustainable and safe preservation of the aquifers and other water resources.
4. The necessity for adopting state-of-the-art technology for sanitation, waste, and wastewater treatment as well as for water recycling, to augment water availability.
5. The critical need to aligning agriculture, horticulture, forestry, poultry, animal husbandry, and all related livelihood initiatives in an appropriate manner, addressing water productivity of the hill ecosystems.
6. The unavoidable act of ensuring safety and quality of water for all kinds of human and cattle consumption, by minimizing contaminations and instituting context-appropriate measures for purifications and verifications.
7. The Importance of not hampering the synergy with nature, and reassuring the commitment to the water and ecosystems, while bringing advanced amenities to enhance the quality of lives in hill systems.
8. The vitality of reconciling with any challenges to water systems, its sustainability and related measures and any adverse impact on the environment, while planning new infrastructure, industry, commerce, and business, in and for the region.

9. The significance of realising the critical challenges posed to the nature and ecosystems, while commoditising water and profiteering on it.
10. The need of participatory planning, implementation, and oversight of safe, sustainable, and resilient water management and governance systems to meet the drinking, domestic, irrigation, commercial, industrial, infrastructural, developmental, and emergency water needs of populations in all hill regions, in a reasonable manner.
11. The essentiality of safeguarding gender, equity and inclusiveness in the entire processes around 11. water and climate.
12. Realising the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation with an acknowledgement that water, sanitation and hygiene are fundamental for sustainable development.

The declaration also acknowledges the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, underscoring their fundamental importance for sustainable development.

Participants commit to generating necessary data, conducting mindful reviews, and taking actions to realize a better future for hill communities amidst water and climate challenges. The declaration calls upon citizens, community groups, governments, and global authorities to reciprocate the spirit of the declaration and prioritize the safety and well-being of hill communities and the environment.

The "Shillong Declaration" represents a significant step towards addressing the complex challenges faced by hill regions worldwide and charting a path towards sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

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